

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. *(Currently Amended)* A paper separator ~~equipped with a plurality of paper-separating fingers for separating one or more sheets of paper and abutting and/or backed off from one or more photosensitive bodies, the paper separator comprising:~~

one or more paper-separating finger bodies, provided at or near one or more upstream ends in one or more paper transport directions of at least one or more of the paper-separating ~~fingers~~finger bodies, and capable of abutting ~~at least one of the~~one or more photosensitive ~~body~~or bodies;

one or more guide members, provided at or near one or more downstream ends in one or more paper transport directions of at least one of the paper-separating ~~fingers~~finger bodies, and capable of touching so as to guide one or more sheets of paper which has or have separated from at least one ~~of the~~or more photosensitive ~~body~~or bodies; and

one or more support components pivotably supporting at least one or more of the paper-separating ~~fingers~~finger bodies so as to impart one or more restoring forces thereto urging at least one of the paper-separating ~~fingers~~finger bodies to, under the force of its own weight, bring at least one or more of the paper-separating finger ~~body~~or bodies into abutting engagement with at least one ~~of the~~or more photosensitive ~~body~~or bodies, and so as to, when at least one of the guide member or members is touching at least one of the sheet or sheets of paper, cause at least one of the finger ~~body~~or bodies to at least partially overcome one or more restoring forces produced by the weight of at least a portion of at least one of the paper-separating ~~fingers~~finger bodies and back off from at least one ~~of the~~or more photosensitive ~~body~~or bodies.

2. *(Currently Amended)* A paper separator according to claim 1 wherein:

at least one of the support component or components is disposed between at least one of the guide member or members and at least one or more of the paper-separating finger body or bodies of the paper-separating fingers.

3. *(Currently Amended)* ~~A paper separator according to claim 1~~ A paper separator equipped with at least two paper-separating finger bodies for separating one or more sheets of paper and abutting and/or backed off from one or more photosensitive bodies, the paper separator comprising:

at least two finger bodies, provided at or near one or more upstream ends in one or more paper transport directions of at least two of the paper-separating finger bodies, and capable of abutting at least one of the photosensitive body or bodies;

one or more guide members, provided at or near one or more downstream ends in one or more paper transport directions of at least two of the paper-separating fingers, and capable of touching so as to guide one or more sheets of paper which has or have separated from at least one of the photosensitive body or bodies; and

one or more support components pivotably supporting at least two of the paper-separating fingers so as to impart one or more restoring forces thereto urging at least one of the paper-separating fingers to, under the force of its own weight, bring at least two of the paper-separating finger bodies into abutting engagement with at least one of the photosensitive body or bodies, and so as to, when at least one of the guide member or members is touching at least one of the

sheet or sheets of paper, cause at least one of the paper-separating finger bodies to at least partially overcome one or more restoring forces produced by the weight of at least a portion of at least one of the paper-separating finger bodies and back off from at least one of the photosensitive body or bodies wherein:

at least two of the paper-separating ~~fingers~~ finger bodies are arranged alongside at least one of the photosensitive body or bodies in one or more directions perpendicular to one or more paper transport directions;

operations bringing respective finger bodies into and out of abutting engagement with at least one of the photosensitive body or bodies being carried out in mutually independent fashion.

4. *(Currently Amended)* ~~A paper separator according to claim 1~~ A paper separator equipped with at least two paper-separating finger bodies for separating one or more sheets of paper and abutting and/or backed off from one or more photosensitive bodies, the paper separator comprising:

at least two finger bodies, provided at or near one or more upstream ends in one or more paper transport directions of at least two of the paper-separating finger bodies, and capable of abutting at least one of the photosensitive body or bodies;

one or more guide members, provided at or near one or more downstream ends in one or more paper transport directions of at least two of the paper-separating finger bodies, and capable of touching so as to guide one or more sheets of paper which has or have separated from at least one of the photosensitive body or bodies; and

one or more support components pivotably supporting at least two of the paper-separating finger bodies so as to impart one or more restoring forces thereto urging at least one of the paper-separating finger bodies to, under the force of its own weight, bring at least two of the paper-separating finger bodies into abutting engagement with at least one of the photosensitive body or bodies, and so as to, when at least one of the guide member or members is touching at least one of the sheet or sheets of paper, cause at least one of the paper-separating finger bodies to at least partially overcome one or more restoring forces produced by the weight of at least a portion of at least one of the paper-separating finger bodies and back off from at least one of the photosensitive body or bodies wherein:

at least two of the paper-separating ~~fingers~~finger bodies are arranged alongside at least one of the photosensitive body or bodies in one or more directions perpendicular to one or more paper transport directions;

operations bringing respective finger bodies into and out of abutting engagement with at least one of the photosensitive body or bodies being carried out in mutually cooperative fashion.

5. *(Currently Amended)* A paper separator according to claim 4 wherein:

each of at least two of the paper-separating ~~fingers~~finger bodies has at least one of the support components; and

operations bringing at least a portion of the finger bodies of the at least two paper-separating ~~fingers~~finger bodies into and out of abutting engagement with at least one of the photosensitive body or bodies are carried out in mutual cooperation due to action of one or more

shafts mutually connecting at least a portion of the support components of the at least two paper-separating ~~fingers~~finger bodies.

6. *(Currently Amended)* A paper separator according to claim 1 wherein:

at least one of the support component or components of the one or more paper-separating ~~fingers~~finger bodies is disposed at one or more locations such as will cause at least one amount by which at least one of the paper-separating finger ~~body~~or bodies moves in one or more directions of engagement with and/or retraction from at least one of the photosensitive body or bodies to be less than at least one amount by which at least one of the guide member or members moves when it touches at least one of the sheet or sheets of paper.

7. *(Previously Presented)* A paper separator according to claim 1 wherein:

at least one of the guide member or members is at least partially formed from at least one material of the same charge polarity as that of at least one toner used to develop at least one latent electrostatic image on at least one of the photosensitive body or bodies.

8. *(Currently Amended)* A paper separator according to claim 1 wherein:

at least one of the paper-separating finger ~~body~~or bodies is at least partially formed from at least one material of the same charge polarity as that of at least one toner used to develop at least one latent electrostatic image on at least one of the photosensitive body or bodies.

9. *(Currently Amended)* A paper separator according to claim 1 wherein:

employed as at least one of the guide member or members there are one or more star-ring-type spurs rotatably supported at or near one or more downstream ends in one or more paper transport directions of at least one of the paper-separating ~~fingers~~finger bodies.

10. (*Currently Amended*) A paper separator according to claim 1 further comprising:

one or more electrostatic clinging prevention means for, during operations bringing at least one of the paper-separating finger body or ~~bodies~~ of at least one of the paper-separating ~~fingers~~finger bodies into and out of abutting engagement with at least one of the photosensitive body or bodies, at least partially preventing electrostatic clinging between at least one of the paper-separating ~~fingers~~finger bodies and one or more members coming in contact with at least one of the paper-separating ~~fingers~~finger bodies.

11. (*Currently Amended*) A paper separator according to claim 10 wherein:

at least one of the electrostatic clinging prevention means is ~~the fact that~~ at least one of the paper-separating ~~fingers~~finger bodies, or at least one of the member or members coming in contact with at least one of the paper-separating ~~fingers~~finger bodies, or both at least one of the paper-separating ~~fingers~~finger bodies and at least one of the member or members coming in contact with at least one of the paper-separating ~~fingers~~finger bodies, is or are formed from one or more antistatic materials.

12. (*Currently Amended*) A paper separator according to claim 10 wherein:

at least one of the electrostatic clinging prevention means is ~~the fact that~~ one or more antistatic treatments have been applied to at least one of the paper-separating ~~fingers~~finger ~~bodies~~, or at least one of the member or members coming in contact with at least one of the paper-separating ~~fingers~~finger ~~bodies~~, or both at least one of the paper-separating ~~fingers~~finger ~~bodies~~ and at least one of the member or members coming in contact with at least one of the paper-separating ~~fingers~~finger ~~bodies~~.

13. *(Currently Amended)* A paper separator according to claim 10 wherein:

at least one of the electrostatic clinging prevention means is ~~the fact that~~ at least one surface resistance of at least one of the paper-separating ~~fingers~~finger ~~bodies~~, or at least one of the member or members coming in contact with at least one of the paper-separating ~~fingers~~finger ~~bodies~~, ~~or both at least one of the paper-separating fingers~~ and at least one of the member or members coming in contact with at least one of the paper-separating ~~fingers~~finger ~~bodies~~, is or are set to at least one value which is not more than $10^{13} \Omega$.

14. *(Currently Amended)* A paper separator according to claim 10 wherein:

at least one of the electrostatic clinging prevention means is ~~the fact that~~ one or more charge-removing members are provided in the vicinity or vicinities of one or more regions where at least one of the paper-separating ~~fingers~~finger ~~bodies~~ comes in contact with at least one of the member or members coming in contact with at least one of the paper-separating ~~fingers~~finger ~~bodies~~.

15. (*Currently Amended*) A processor cartridge provided with at least one paper separator according to claim 1 for one or more image forming apparatuses;

at least one of the paper-separating ~~fingers~~finger bodies and at least one of the photosensitive body or bodies being constructed so as to permit installation and removal in integral fashion with respect to at least one of the image forming apparatus or apparatuses.

16. (*Currently Amended*) A processor cartridge for one or more image forming apparatuses and provided with at least one paper separator according to claim 15;

at least one of the photosensitive body or bodies being constructed so as to permit installation and/or removal thereof with respect to at least one of the paper-separating ~~fingers~~finger bodies; and

when at least one of the processor cartridge or cartridges is made to assume at least one orientation permitting installation and/or removal of at least one of the photosensitive body or bodies, at least one of the paper-separating ~~fingers~~finger bodies is acted upon by one or more restoring forces produced by the force of its own weight and causing at least one of the finger ~~body or~~ bodies to back off from at least one of the photosensitive body or bodies.

17. (*Currently Amended*) A paper separator according to claim 2 wherein:

at least two of the paper-separating ~~fingers~~finger bodies are arranged alongside at least one of the photosensitive body or bodies in one or more directions perpendicular to one or more paper transport directions;

operations bringing respective finger bodies into and out of abutting engagement with at least one of the photosensitive body or bodies being carried out in mutually independent fashion.

18. *(Currently Amended)* A paper separator according to claim 2 wherein:

at least two of the paper-separating ~~fingers~~finger bodies are arranged alongside at least one of the photosensitive body or bodies in one or more directions perpendicular to one or more paper transport directions;

operations bringing respective finger bodies into and out of abutting engagement with at least one of the photosensitive body or bodies being carried out in mutually cooperative fashion.

19. *(Currently Amended)* A paper separator according to claim 11 wherein:

at least one of the electrostatic clinging prevention means is the fact that at least one surface resistance of at least one of the paper-separating ~~fingers~~finger bodies, or at least one of the member or members coming in contact with at least one of the paper-separating ~~fingers~~finger bodies, or both at least one of the paper-separating ~~fingers~~finger bodies and at least one of the member or members coming in contact with at least one of the paper-separating ~~fingers~~finger bodies, is or are set to at least one value which is not more than $10^{13} \Omega$.

20. *(Currently Amended)* A paper separator according to claim 12 wherein:

at least one of the electrostatic clinging prevention means is ~~the fact that~~ at least one surface resistance of at least one or more of the paper-separating ~~fingers~~finger bodies, or at least one of the member or members coming in contact with at least one or more of the paper-

separating ~~fingers~~finger bodies, or both at least one of the paper-separating ~~fingers~~finger bodies and at least one of the member or members coming in contact with at least one of the paper-separating ~~fingers~~finger bodies, is or are set to at least one value which is not more than $10^{13} \Omega$.